

Education and State Power

Part 1

F.T. Mikhailov. "Obrazovanie i vlast'." The article was prepared with support from the Russian Humanities Foundation, RGNF no. 01-03-78003. Translated by Stephen D. Shenfield. Journal of Russian and East European Psychology, vol. 44, no. 1, January–February 2006, pp. xx–xx.

In a previous article,¹ I noted that for a long time education has been not so much culture as structure—a structure of institutional subordination. Now I shall try to develop this idea by discussing the situation that has long prevailed in our country. Although this statement is addressed not only to our Russian education and to our expensive (very expensive!) state institutions, I shall have to deliberate upon the Russian form of their fusion. The basis and foundation of the latter lie in the depths of history, in the very essence of the mode of reproduction of people's lives; this requires that I immediately clarify the two main terms that define this mode.

Extensive and intensive labour

In an economy of the extensive type, for countless millennia, the chief energy carriers were people themselves—the individuals of *Homo sapiens*. It is they who were the living “mechanisms” that transformed their own potential energy into the work necessary for the reproduction of the life of their communities, and thereby of each of their lives. It is they who in those prehistoric times were the sole subjects of their own purposive and volitional labour, capable of planning and directing it. And their historical community, the clan commune, was the “individual” that accomplished the common task. In itself, it combined the collective energy carrier and the “mechanism” for transforming its energy into common work, the “planner” and the “manager.”²

The social division of labour into livestock rearing, land cultivation, handicrafts, trade, and so on did not change the extensive character of labour, for the quantitative expansion of the means, conditions, and objects of labour ensured the preservation of new historical communities—peoples. Only the management of labour and the administration of social life as a whole underwent radical change: the state form of what was now the social organization of these communities, its power and its laws, which had become necessary for managing with the aid of

violence the socially diverse forms of forced labour, replaced the traditions and rituals of labour and of life as a whole.

The immense masses of those who till the land (and increasingly more land is needed, as there is no intensive cultivation), rear and breed livestock, and arms in hand protect the land of the state and its herds and flocks and conquer foreign lands, herds, and flocks—in short, all those who by means of violence ensure slave labour and the unquestioning obedience of all people to the will of the subjects of state power—they all, precisely through their mass character, their quantity, determine the survival of both the state and the whole people.

Various historical forms of despotic state power arose and disappeared over thousands of years of the history of extensive economy. But in all these forms the chief—or, rather, even the sole—subject of the government of people, and only through them of affairs, was (and under conditions of extensive economy remains to this very day) the clan of state officials. And it is unimportant what they were called and which functions precisely they fulfilled. The entire arrayed host of the king was no more than their “protégé” [the word used here, *vydvizhenets*, is a Soviet term for a worker promoted to an administrative position—Trans.]: their power and his lay wholly in the ramified and all-pervasive “apparatus of power.” It was precisely this retinue that manipulated the king. It continues to manipulate him to this very day.

In a number of European countries, an economy of the intensive type replaced the economy of the extensive type thanks to the development of machine production. In this type of economy the energy carriers that determine the type and character of production are different. The old sources of energy—biological (the physical power of man, the traction power of agricultural and domesticated animals, the potential heat energy of wood and coal) and mechanical (wind and waterpower, the power of man enhanced by devices like the lever, the winch, and other mechanical tools)—were retained, but with a new (“machine”) quality. But the goal-setting and volitional work of man, of his mind, his wit, and all his other creative capacities, so productively manifest in the Renaissance development of handicrafts, here attained true virtuosity. Marx wrote very poetically of this.³ Under conditions of machine production (all the more so in developed industry), the “virtuosity” now of the machine makes special mastery on the part of the worker superfluous, turning him into its appendage. This applies, alas, even to the virtuosity of electronic calculating-deciding machines (computers);⁴ this makes especially evident the leading role of the creative thought of people of intellectual labour in intensive production, even from its first appearance.

The goal of management of people’s economic activity became not the expansion of the quantity of means of production, objects and products of labour, and labour power, but the improvement of their quality. This required turning knowledge of

mechanical, physical, chemical, biological, and other natural processes (of their invariants), and then also of the invariants of business management—the laws of production and trade, bookkeeping, advertising, marketing, and so on—into the actual leading productive force of the intensive economy. A force that it itself generated!

The relics of extensive production pose a threat of economic and social collapse and exert a fateful influence on the life of earthlings—and not only due to the fragmented pattern of state, private, cooperative, and all other forms of property at the global and national levels. The fact that personal and creative intellectual labour has become the chief energy carrier of the intensive economy does not deprive traditional energy carriers and sources of raw material of their essential function in the system of contemporary production. State ownership of them is now not obligatory, but without state protection of the interests of their owners the latter would not last even a month in this role. State structures of management are also “corporate” owners. Their property is power. And by no means is it virtual power. It is the army, police, and other “force structures.” It is also all the arsenals of armaments—the most profitable commodity. For their “consumption”—even storage,⁵ not to mention routine army use or, all the more so, war—requires constant replenishment, turning the state order to the traders and producers of armaments, ammunition, and all other equipment for the power functions of the state into a profitable and very important source of enrichment and of expansion of the functions of officialdom. Thus, production of the extensive type germinates everywhere and yields very palpable sprouts and fruits. This theme is a large one and of fundamental importance for our own theme, but enough has been said for the time being. However, in places where the domination of the extensive economy over the intensive has been retained, the direct power of the “apparatus” over people remains virtually absolute.

It is precisely in this world of ours—a world of intense inter-weaving of the interests of the collective subjects of intensive and extensive economy—that the question of the fate of people’s very culture takes acute form. The question of the fate of the social forms of the transmission of culture to new generations is especially acute. I shall permit myself to illustrate its acuity by reference to the paradoxes of our philosophy education, but only because by the will of fate I happen to have worked in this field, both as a student and for a long time already as a teacher.⁶

Philosophy education

In the 1920s and at the very beginning of the 1930s, various books and textbooks were published in our country for the study of both Marxist philosophy and the works of its precursors. This was a truly rich arsenal of philosophy classics from the pre-Socratics to the Russian philosophers—moreover, not only those who followed

Marx. But the main point is that never again did such a short interval witness the creation and publication of so many profound investigations and masterpieces, marked with the stamp of genius, literally in all branches of culture! It was precisely in this period that A.F. Losev, G.G. Shpet, M.M. Bakhtin, and L.S. Vygotsky created and published their works. I fear even to allude to other spheres of spiritual creativity: so many names would have to be mentioned, so many breakthroughs into the unknown recalled in their fundamental theory, in science and in art! And much material of the greatest value was translated at that time. Merely as an example, let me note that in no other country of the world, including all the countries of Europe and America, was Sigmund Freud then published so fully and in such long print runs.

But everything changed after the very first pogrom decrees of the Central Committee of the all-powerful party of bureaucratic managers (“On Pedological Distortions . . .” [*O pedologicheskikh izvrashcheniakh . . .*] and others). And especially after the appearance of the textbook History of the AUCP(B). Short Course [*Istoriia VKP(b). Kratkii kurs*], the fourth chapter of which—“On Dialectical and Historical Materialism” [*O dialekticheskom i istoricheskom materializme*—was written by Stalin (1938). Its text was immediately imbued with ideological charisma. Dialectical and historical materialism “according to Stalin,” as the sole true philosophy, was counterposed to all other philosophical views of the world, acquiring strictly observed definition as Marxist-Leninist philosophy. Only this philosophy then became a compulsory object of study in the all-encompassing network of so-called party enlightenment, and, of course, at all the higher education institutions of the Soviet Union. And right away everything truly creative in spiritual culture began to be checked for unconditional loyalty to its dogmas. All the creators of culture in all its spheres, forms, and manifestations were deprived of their freedom by the iron shackles of the unprecedented arbitrary power of party officials!

At first, study of the philosophical principles of Marxism-Leninism was limited to the aforementioned chapter by Stalin, which was included in the general course on party history with explanations and “decodings” for the least prepared. For long decades, in fact, this same article was the unquestionable semantic and structural basis of standard higher education textbooks and study manuals on philosophy. This remained the case even after the philosophy department was detached from the unified department of “the foundations of Marxism-Leninism.” This article of Stalin’s was supplemented, in accordance with the tasks of the communist upbringing of our future intelligentsia, by the semiliterate ad-libbing of true Stalinists, more or less appropriate quotations from the works of the “classics of Marxism-Leninism,” contemporary examples, and the instructive presentation of resolutions of recent party congresses and reports of its ever brilliant general secretaries. And all philosophy curricula were approved de facto by officials from

the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and de jure by the USSR Ministry of Higher and Special Secondary Education. This ministry, by the way, was just one of the lower rungs of a single stratified and therefore sovereign party bureaucratic hierarchy.

Who from my generation and generations close to it does not recall the apostolic style of Stalin's definitions of the "features" of materialism and "laws" of dialectics, which in fact comprised the entire philosophical basis of all subdivisions and all "applications" of dialectical materialism? None of us has forgotten that in the second part of this same materialism, but now labeled historical materialism—in this, by Stalin's own definition, extension of dialectical materialism to the laws of development of society—he affirmed the equally eternal principles of class struggle and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The deviation of a theoretician or lecturer from these features, laws, and principles, at all times of our life including the period of stagnation [under Brezhnev— Trans.], was punished in highly diverse ways, from deprivation of the right to lecture to arrest or commitment to a psychiatric hospital [*psikhushka*].

There is no need today seriously to rebuke all the half-forgotten or completely forgotten authors of pseudo-popular textbooks and manuals for philosophical illiteracy! They were always opportunely trained adepts of such philosophy either in the corresponding university departments or in academy institutes. And these adepts suddenly became so numerous that to encounter a different kind of independently thinking philosopher was as unexpected and strange as to see a sable in Africa. But at the moment I am not talking about that. The conclusion to which I would like to lead the reader might sound like this: at that (our) time Marxist-Leninist philosophy was mastered, more or less successfully, by the whole world, but the world, despite Marx's hopes, did not become philosophical.⁷ On the contrary! Not without the help of philosophy and with such mastery of it, the world grew ever more clearly alienated from the creative nature of man, and therefore also from high philosophical culture.

That is so, but the paradox of our past history lies in the fact that, notwithstanding the truth of what I have said above, even the senior lecturer's [*dotsentskii*] Marxism⁸ of general compulsory education in philosophy was a vent for searching thinking on students' part. For as a rule they were befuddled by the ideological drill and pedantry of party historians, who did not forgive them the smallest error regarding the dates and agendas of all the party conferences and congresses. It was a vent, by the way, not only for students. How did this prove possible? Here we must keep in mind at least two circumstances.

1. Even Stalinist philosophy was nonetheless Marxist-Leninist, and the overwhelming majority of its adepts piously believed in the continuity of philosophical ideas from Thales to Marx and Lenin, considering it their task and duty

to present the Stalinist interpretation of their classical works as equivalent to philosophical culture as a whole. There was no escaping it: Marxist-Leninist philosophy was declared the supreme achievement of world philosophy and of world theoretical thought in general, and so it was necessary to turn to the ideas of the past, if only to provide a cogent demonstration of this truth. In addition, included as obligatory reading for curricula in dialectical and historical materialism were philosophical works by Marx (Theses on Feuerbach, On the Method of Political Economy, the first chapter of The German Ideology, etc.) and Engels (L. Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy, etc.). And students had to study Lenin's book Materialism and Empiriocriticism over quite a long period (at least six seminar sessions).

2. I cannot but recall that even within senior lecturer's Marxism there were real masters, textually familiar with classical philosophy and able to enthrall their students with its nonstandard interpretation. They had detailed knowledge of the classical texts and by their very presence in departments of "Marxism-Leninism," and later in the philosophy departments detached therefrom, exerted an influence also on young lecturers through their captivating discussion of classical works of philosophy. Thus, real life both under Stalin and in the period of stagnation was immeasurably more complex than the conceptions characteristic of all the well-known contemporary ideologists who project onto the past their newfound one-sided value orientations.

I recall the fundamental contradictions of the deep undercurrent of those years on the basis not of materials of that time but of personal impressions, and for this reason I do not deal with the pre-war period of our philosophical life. Yes, so it all was: the doctrinaire directives of decrees of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik) [AUCP(B)]-CPSU on culture, science, and philosophy were a real threat to any manifestation of creativity, let alone personal originality, in thought in general and philosophical thought in particular. Moreover, all philosophical ideas that had been incorporated in the high culture of the spirit of human history were standardized by the dogmas of party ideology to the point of primitivism. It is also true that there were many who lived off their wretched stock of learned-by-rote Marxist-Leninist "primary sources," thereby acquiring political capital that gave them titles, positions, and invariable election to the presidiums of endless directive ideological gatherings and conferences. And they were the most zealous defenders of the directives. And any revisionist had ample opportunity to discover both that their name was legion and that theirs was a fury that knew no doubts.

In my time I too discovered this, but finding myself in the position of a social outcast there suddenly were revealed to me, as to all other "inadvertent deviationists," many others by their creative heterodoxy and truly moral essence. As a result, both

in the years of stagnation and in the harsher Stalin years, within the real space of cultural creativity, through the personal quest for the profound sense of classical and contemporary philosophical ideas, new nontrivial philosophical conceptions were born. These conceptions gained strength and took root in their authors' informal ties with likeminded seekers of truth.

Furthermore, throughout the Soviet Union, in the apparently routine life of departments of Marxism-Leninism, regimented by the ministry's list of ideas and names, the inner tension of an increasingly acute confrontation between the talented and searching and the true Leninists constantly accumulated and came to light. In some places its maturation and prolongation took place under the surface, while elsewhere they triggered an explosion of passion and the drawing of organizational conclusions [for instance, to dismiss or reassign personnel or to restructure or dissolve departments—Trans.] by party organizations (from those of higher education institutions up to *raion* and city party committees, and in some cases even the Central Committee itself and the KGB). But under certain conditions (above all when an authoritative, talented, and intelligent lecturer had become the intellectual focus of a department) there would emerge a group, even if only a small one, of truly talented and independently thinking lecturers.

I knew of such departments not only in Moscow,⁹ but also in Rostov-on-Don, Alma-Ata, Dushanbe, Novosibirsk, and a number of other cities. In this case, lively student souls literally fell in love with philosophy as a special world-creating culture. Nor was it rare for some graduates of special higher education institutions—technical, medical, and the like—under the influence of philosophy lecturers and with the support of departments to take up graduate studies in philosophy and defend candidate's dissertations and doctoral theses in philosophy. The personal and departmental publications of the associates of such departments attracted the instantaneous attention of thinking people, and taught others to make sense of the thinkable.

But all the same! All the same, in the higher philosophy education of those long decades it was still that same Stalinist ministry curriculum that reigned supreme.

Long-experienced philosophy lecturers may object that after Khrushchev's decisive exposé of Stalin's cult of personality this curriculum underwent radical change. It would, indeed, appear that fundamentally new themes were introduced into it. First, the contribution to philosophy of Stalin himself was reassessed: he had, it was alleged, made serious errors also in the presentation of Marxist-Leninist philosophy—he had belittled Lenin's legacy and his understanding of dialectics had been oversimplified, not to mention his non-observance of Leninist norms of party life. With regard to dialectical materialism, the curriculum required from students scientific knowledge of the material essence of everything real—namely, the physiology of higher nervous activity (I.P. Pavlov!) and the epoch-making

discoveries of biology. (For a long time this meant the agrobiolgy of Lysenko and Michurin and the formulas of criticism of formal genetics from the point of view of this gibberish.) These discoveries had allegedly “definitively confirmed dialectical materialism and exposed idealism, religion, and mysticism in the party manner.”

But, as before, the so-called laws and categories of this sham dialectics were studied by students, to use the words of the poet, not in the Hegelian fashion but in terms of a very small set of paired categories, presented at the level of common sense, and, moreover, shuffled in an arbitrary manner, with examples from those same “classics of materialist science.”

As for the treatment of historical materialism, I do not wish even to recall it, for this most scientific sociology was completely devoid both of history and of materialism, unless abstract economic determinism is to be taken as such. Here the history-making subjects again turned out to be categories, the content of each of which was derived from other categories, radically distorting Marx’s understanding of history, which he called materialist in contrast to the equally unhistorical and idealist categorial exercises of the Young Hegelians.

To fill out the picture of “renewal,” I note that each year the history made by the party burst into this, in Herman Hesse’s expression, *Glasperlenspiel*¹⁰—into the curriculum for historical materialism, with the incorporation into it as obligatory elements of decrees of the Central Committee, resolutions of party congresses, and speeches of the next general secretary. In this way the standard “Marxist-Leninist” philosophy curriculum was preserved throughout the years of stagnation, both for students of philosophy faculties and for students in all other higher education institutions. For its social basis was preserved—the omnipotence of the bureaucratic structures of the state and party apparatus over all forms and over the entire content of secondary and higher education.

All that I have said above may give rise to the perplexing thought: why did an apparently natural question not arise for us at that time?¹¹ Namely: what forced (forces) certified, even renowned, philosophers, trying to prepare in time for the new academic year, to write and publish textbooks that in content and structure correspond not to their uniquely personal understanding of the problems of philosophy and science but to the ideological standards of state curricula, which, as noted above, were based on Stalin’s wretched outline of materialism and dialectics? Perhaps because at that time most of us became certified and renowned by defending dissertations and publishing monographs that deliberately kept within the limits of those same ideological standards?

Such an answer seems to suggest itself. But would such an answer really not itself be ideologically standard (merely with the reverse sign)? A serious answer is needed today precisely because our social consciousness in all its layers has again

been inundated by a sea of ideological and superficial interpretations of the past, and, consequently, also of the present. But it was in order to seek in the past a more serious answer to the question posed above that I returned thereto. The question is, in my view, a very fundamental one. And it is such first of all for philosophy education, which is still organized in accordance with ministry standards.

So again and again I ask myself and my old colleagues: did the ministry's philosophy curricula become different immediately after condemnation of the cult of personality? Hardly! For, as before, they were examined and approved by the official ideologists of the Central Committee of the CPSU, preserving the split of philosophical analysis of human existence as a single process into abstract sociology and apologetics for primitive naturalism, thickly mixed with vulgar economic determinism. A blatant split in direct contradiction to Marx. I undertake to prove, in strict accordance with the texts of these curricula, that the way philosophy is understood and taught has been preserved with no change whatsoever. It has merely been camouflaged by naturalistic themes from the natural sciences and by new ideological justifications of party-state policy.

It was not by chance that the chief whose subordinates through-out the long post-Khrushchev years approved these curricula—namely, a certain Trapeznikov, boss of the whole of Soviet science and the whole of Soviet education¹²—at a meeting of heads of social science departments at the CPSU Central Committee (in 1968, if I am not mistaken), having evaluated the work of departments of party history as very good and the work of philosophy departments as not up to requirements, ingenuously admitted: “We rightly criticize the errors of Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin in politics. But he made an invaluable contribution to Marxist theory. I know that many of you take a glance at his collected works before lectures, only you admit it to no one. I am bolder than you. I say openly that I constantly read and reread his works.”¹³

And suddenly! Suddenly, in a single instant, the mist of confusion dispersed and the whole rigmarole vanished into thin air. Our Soviet people—the whole of this new historical community, until recently united forever [an allusion to the Soviet national anthem—Trans.]—disappeared, receded irreversibly into the past, fell apart into peoples and nationalities, states and regions, tribes and clans, classes, and groups of every other kind, large and small. Each has its own language, its own interests directed against others, its own (suddenly revived) faith in its own god. But this, as you yourselves understand, is no basis for philosophy.

Especially as those who for decades had diligently studied and staunchly taught the history of the party, the philosophy of Marxism-Leninism, scientific communism and the political economy of capitalism and socialism, scientific atheism and Marxist-Leninist aesthetics had somehow, all at once, woken up in the morning as other

people and understood (or again believed?) that all that they had studied and taught was lies (just so!), that there was no socialism and never had been, that history is moved not by the revolutionary resolution of contradictions between productive forces and relations of production but by the market and democracy, that our historical past had been stolen from us, and that it was necessary to discover anew the old Russia that we had lost. But the main thing for my theme is that it suddenly turned out that there is no one philosophy—there are even very many of them; that each of them is interesting and important in itself and we need them all; and that the dialogue of philosophical cultures does not require the victory of one over all the others but, on the contrary, turns each into a value in itself.

So, long live boundless pluralism! Pluralism in the economy, in the social forms of life, in politics, in philosophy. And our philosophers (not only lecturers), like the peas from the pod in the fable of H.C. Andersen, instantly flew off in different directions from the statified philosophy of pseudo-Marxist monism. Some, having acknowledged as a self-sufficient truth the pluralism of all philosophical concepts of being, bowed down only to the latter as their new mono-idea—for example, to the total criticism of Karl Popper. And this, perhaps, is still the most philosophical variant of criticism—scientific criticism. Others chose E. Husserl, reading his works for the first time or in some cases acquiring at second-hand a conception of his phenomenology, *epoche*, and the other now fashionable symbols of their new faith. Yet others found themselves a refuge in Russian religious philosophy.¹⁴ And so on and so forth.

Well, pluralism of philosophical ideas is indeed an absolute truth. But it may become simple to the point of wretchedness in its empiricist obviousness, and just as trivial as abstractly asserted monism. Here as everywhere, abstractly posited opposites converge: boundless pluralism is monological if only because, irrespective of the personal convictions of the “pluralists,” it surely “liberates” philosophy from its own object. An object that is the same for all philosophical schools and tendencies and without which philosophy turns from a single ramified and self-developing concept of being into a “fruit salad” randomly thrown together from irresponsible verbiage along the lines of Repetilov’s [a character in Griboedov’s play *Woe from Wit*—Trans.] “Glance and Something.”¹⁵ And for an equally abstractly posited monism it is simply obligatory to recognize all other philosophical schools and tendencies as striving toward but not having attained truth—precisely that truth the abstract doctrinaire essence of which our “monologist” shares and advocates.

Need I say that the enrichment and deepening of the single ob-ject of philosophy is possible only on the basis of the developed wealth of discussion of its various aspects and their phenomena in various ethno-epochal cultures of humanity by

personally different creators? That is, just like the object of any other theoretical or aesthetic culture.

But, one way or another, all has changed, everyone has changed.

Except that the ministries have remained. Our state has remained.

You say: but that is now another state, those are other ministries. For we are now supposed to have a civil society, in which the role of the state and its power structures undergoes cardinal change: the state, for the purpose of ensuring legality, retains its function of governing people, but in a civil society cedes the function of managing affairs to those who while observing the laws concern themselves with these affairs in accordance with their calling, understanding, and personal wish.

Yes, the Soviet state was not the state of a civil society. Now everyone knows this. But, it seems, everyone or almost everyone also knows that the new Russian society is again in no sense a civil society, and that the state that governs that society is in no sense the state of a civil society. True, democracy has a place in our society. In Russia, as in all democratic countries, parties struggle for power. But they represent no social groups except the class of officials. They are always ill-assorted and unstable alliances of those who have tasted the sweetness of power with its opportunities for personal enrichment and therefore strive to remain in its structures and those who have not made a success of anything else (except dubious business ventures and, in some cases, outright crime) and crave a prominent and lucrative place in the state hierarchy. This forces me to recall the Marx that they have rejected: democracy is the chance for citizens once every four years to choose which representatives of the ruling class will represent and suppress them for the next four years. In the original, as you recall, Marx has a beautiful play on words: *vor-und zerstellen*. Only for some reason he failed to add that material provision is made for the officials who win at elections out of taxes on the incomes of those same citizens. Consequently, the citizens not only choose but also feed those who lead them (and insofar as possible suppress them), although their leaders do not confine themselves to this and exploit their position for a personal enrichment worthy (in all senses) of their exalted status.

In our country, the ruling class (historically—caste) remains the disproportionately bloated bureaucratic corps, which effects its own expanded reproduction in accordance with the principle of *causa sui*. It still has considerable property in land and mineral resources and in industrial and agricultural means of production, although they are in a sorry state. This caste is still just finding its way toward the spontaneously but rapidly expanding Russian non-state capital, forging links in passing also with those of its unexpected owners who are direct subjects of its primitive accumulation—the owners of speculative and simply of robber capital.

The only difference from Western models is that the independence of the people's representatives and of their parties and blocs from the interests and needs of their electors is more blatant and obvious in our country than in the old democratic states. There the outer cover and respectable image of political parties long ago acquired symbolic (more precisely, semiotic) significance. And the constant shakeup of top officials in the traditional bodies of legislative and executive power changes nothing in the governmental system, which has long been tightly bound up with the interests of the so-called business circles—that is, of capital and of the military-industrial complex as its chief social and political instrument.

In this situation, it is only the ideology of “equal opportunities” that flourishes luxuriantly in our country. This ideology suddenly descended at the beginning of the 1990s, *inter alia* upon our state and municipal bodies for the administration of education, in many forms of “private” pedagogical initiatives, a very few of which were in essence truly civic.¹⁶

I have in mind mainly the spontaneous appearance everywhere of all kinds of colleges, gymnasiums, *lycées*, private schools, and private universities. And, most important, it suddenly became popular and even fashionable to proclaim, whenever an educational institution was created or half-heartedly privatized, one's own curricula, hurriedly devised or borrowed from world pedagogical authorities, and correspondingly new modes and methods of teaching. An epidemic of renaming of educational institutions swept the country, generating semantic absurdities like hot ice cream or a round square—for example, “medical (or pedagogical, technical, etc.) university.”

Only this is the strange thing: for all the diversity of content, forms, and methods of teaching in these educational institutions [*uchrezhdeniia*—literally, establishments—Trans.] (ah, what a precise and apt Russian word!), in one way or another they all remained loyal to the essence and rules of formal education, acting thenceforth with a circumspect eye on the reaction of central and local boards of education.

I shall speak of formal education later, but their concern with the requirements of the state authorities was and remains natural, for their very legitimacy is determined by the state (the ministry) and depends on their meeting all standard requirements regarding the content, forms, and methods of educational activity. This places new educational institutions in the same position as those that have remained in direct subordination to the entire hierarchy of boards of education—as though the latter had established them themselves.

“Well,” you object once more, “how could it be otherwise? These ‘boards,’ as it pleases you to call them, are the state, and it is precisely the state that really did establish them by recognizing them as legitimate. Besides, many of the creators of these schools and universities make a complete mess of things in the absence of

state supervision, concealing their true mercenary goals and professional incompetence behind the facade of innovation. And not infrequently this has happened. He who recognizes their legitimacy (even if not for them all from the start) is simply obliged to monitor their observance of the supreme interests of the state. He who pays (in this case—oversees) the piper calls the tune.”

The objection is accepted—on first reading. Only later I shall have to speak in greater detail precisely about oversight and the tune.

Since the beginning of perestroika, the new relations of the educational authorities with their educational institutions and with those that are not quite theirs have passed through two periods: the period of confusion and—most recently!—the period of statification.

In the first—romantic—period, the central and local educational authorities, having lost firm ground under their feet—that is, the directive regimentation of their every step by the state—were more than confused. In many regions of the country, they even fell into temptation: without asking the top leadership, they hastened to support local innovators, some of them heretically bold, recruited progressive perestroika-minded people to their staff, and abandoned the old style of work. I not only observed this process over the country’s expanses from Sakhalin to Karelia, but also in a number of cases discussed it in working meetings with the educational administrators of *raion*, city, *oblast*, and *krai* boards. It was precisely this first period that prepared the ground for the expansion and official legitimization of creative initiatives in schools and university departments—above all, in philosophy departments.

Below I shall try, by means of examples of the current status of philosophy departments, to demonstrate that although the second period—the period of the new statification of education—has not yet ended its chief goal has been accomplished: everything that was, or was intended to become, civic—innovatory, bold, spontaneous, independent—is doomed, even today, to complete and unconditional capitulation to formal and soulless bureaucratic uniformity. In this connection, a little more on the history of the attitude of the authorities to civil initiatives.

How the past overflows into the present

The most amusing thing is that in Russia at the end of the nineteenth century and very beginning of the twentieth century the clash between civil initiatives (and, consequently, of the corresponding forms civil society) and “state interests”¹⁷ took absolutely the same forms. The first citizens of Russia were fully aware of this. For purposes of illustration I shall cite models of the educational journalism of that time. Take special note: all the texts that I quote below only in part could have been

reproduced in full as the most contemporary, the most relevant to current events, and at the same time theoretically the best-grounded interpretation of our own incarnation of the eternal problem of society in all the forms of its alienation—the problem of People and State.

And so, how do you like this?

Let us look at just one paragraph of the essay “The Trifles of Life” by the great writer of the Russian land M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, which reads like the latest publications of the newspaper *Pervoe sentiabria* [First of September, i.e., the beginning of the school year—Trans.]:

“First of all, over the whole school hangs the leveling role of the circular. Not only the limits and content of knowledge but also the number of hours per year to be devoted to each of its branches are specified in every detail. It is not the striving toward the dissemination of knowledge that stands in first place but the unreasoning fear of such dissemination. The special characteristics of different students are forgotten altogether: all are supposed cut to the same measure, all are given the same obligatory size. The sole measure of assessment is the passing or failing grade [ball, a mark on a scale from 1 to 5, or the sum of such marks—Trans.]; moreover, the extent to which blind chance influences this mark is not taken into consideration. The personality of the teacher is also forgotten. He is permitted neither to dwell for an extra five minutes on a topic that he considers important nor to devote five minutes less to a topic that seems to him insufficiently important or premature. He is obliged to fulfill the letter of the circular—and no more.”¹⁸

Here is another voice from the past [P.F. Kapterev]:

“Society, understood as an association of parents, is interested above all not in state permits for education, not in the school system and its laws, but in their children, their development, their health, and their good and cheerful mood. Not state and school laws, but the laws of nature, physiological and psychological laws—that is what matters to society above all in the organization of schools—the laws of God, not of man. Society in its private schools conducts all kinds of pedagogical experiments, tries out new methods and systems, and sets new paths in upbringing and education. The state makes use of results that are already available and applies them in the organization of its own schools. All great pedagogues have been private figures and not ministers of popular enlightenment. Among the latter there has been not a single pedagogue of note. Ministers of popular enlightenment are administrators and men

of state, not pedagogues; and pedagogues are educators of youth who base their activity on scientific data and not on administrative directives.¹⁹

“By defending pedagogy based not on government regulations but on satisfaction of the needs of children’s nature and on the data of science, society brings life and light into school affairs and serves as the source of improvements in them and as the bearer of innovations of all kinds. The state in its educational activity readily falls into many deficiencies: into dead formalism, into routine, into uniform organization of all educational institutions, which it confuses with the unity of general educational principles. The state attaches too much importance to the fulfilment of regulations and curricula. It even holds to the idea that the people can be educated through the police. According to our current legislation, the police are charged with ensuring that the young revere their elders and that children obey their parents and servants their masters (vol. 14, Regulations on the Prevention and Interception of Crimes [Ust. O preduprezhdenii i presechenii prestuplenii], p. 122).²⁰”

While the first paragraph of the cited text describes the reality that emerged in the first period of the post-perestroika life of our contemporary schools and higher education institutions, the second accurately defines the essence of the current conflict between authentically civic and so-called state interests. And again:

“But, of course, we do not at all think that public activity in the field of education is free of deficiencies... Desirable variety in the organization of educational institutions can easily pass over into a complete mishmash and lack of principle.²¹ Hence follows the necessary conclusion that only the combination of state and public pedagogy can yield excellence in national education.²²”

And thereby the author accurately defines the social role of the state in a civil society: the authoritative setting of legal bounds for any object field of civil initiatives and for their social forms. And the bounds of law have been known since days of old: the freedom of each is constrained only by the freedom of others. If someone’s initiative in the sphere of educational activity infringes on the freedom of the teacher, of parents, or—this is especially terrible—of children, then an authoritative state prohibition on the criminal initiative will ensure, as I said above, satisfaction of the needs of children’s nature. And civil initiatives based on the data of science will be able to bring life and light into school affairs and serve as the source of improvements in them and as the bearer of innovations of all kinds.

No, it is by no means a coincidence that an author of the contemporary newspaper *Pervoe sentiabria* should echo almost word for word the invective that Saltykov-

Shchedrin and Kapterev directed at the exclusively bureaucratic administration of educational affairs:

“Many citizens—too many—think that educational policy is the natural action of the authorities, political and educational, to change the educational situation in the country. This delusion leads to the authorities—or, more precisely, the bureaucrats—starting themselves to believe that administration is the source of change. And the longer people remain in thrall to this delusion, the more the real agents of development in education—initiative and creativity—atrophy. And the myth turns into reality: administration takes the place of the sole source of change. The place is occupied, but administrators are unable to produce the real content of change. The object of their work is something else—the norm of educational activity, the conditions of educational activity, but not the activity itself. The source of change in the educational situation is the productive conflict among parents, students, and teachers. It is precisely they, by their complex and contradictory interaction, who create the potential energy of development that, now with the assistance of administrators, may lead to changes.

“Educational policy takes shape out of the demands of citizens, their vision of what the system of education should be like, the manifestation of children’s educational interests, the goals that the agents of education formulate for themselves, and the opportunities that the state may provide.”²³

Apparently the time has come to return to our own time. But actually we have not been distracted from it: Kapterev’s time is our time. For the history of our post-perestroika education has also been accompanied by exacerbation of the incompatibility between civil educational initiatives and the strivings of the united clan of bureaucrats to restore their unconstrained freedom to govern—the freedom, naturally, to govern not affairs but people. Under these conditions state officials have never renounced and will never renounce what they cherish more than sight itself—their right to govern people, even if they understand nothing of their affairs. So they will put up a desperate fight against civil initiatives. The entire history of Russia stands behind them.

Education and State Power

Part 2

So who governs our education today?

No, respected readers, I have not again been carried away either by historical parallels or by the ideological critique of officialdom! What I am going to discuss now would easily turn precisely into ideological invective and journalistic exercises without an understanding of the calamitous (truly historical) role that educational and all other state offices play in education even today. Those deep historical and (especially) fundamental theoretical problems whose comprehension is essential to an adequate understanding of the causes of the fateful crisis of world and diverse Russian communities and of their cultures are, by virtue of the object of their activity, no concern of the bureaucrats who staff these offices, as they were no concern of any of their predecessors.

But, after all, all the problems of education never were and cannot be anything other than manifestations of the problems (inner contradictions) of people's very way of life. Therefore, while the bureaucratic managers of education experience these problems alongside everyone else, they do not as such form part of the object sphere of their professional concerns. The object of the tempestuous activity of state employees is by no means the resolution of the true (social) problems of education, but government of the people who implement their decrees, instructions, and laws on education. The latter are predetermined by political tasks and by the capacity of the state treasury.

Our combined social, political, economic, and socio-cultural crisis also manifests itself in the fact that nowadays the ideological, populistically ignorant "justifications" of all doctrinaire reforms (that is, not only in the field of education) are camouflaged stylistically and lexically as science. Only not that science of which Kapterev wrote so hopefully, but journalism given the appearance of science by means of professional terminology and relying on premature and therefore dubious historical parallels and diffuse images like West–East, Eurasianism, globalism, and pan-Islamism, up to and including semi-mystical prophecies. As a rule, the "ontology" of such journalism is represented by the data of even more dubious sociological cross-sections of so-called public opinion. Each pair of abstractions on which it relies, encompassing by its lexical sense only some isolated phenomenon of

social life, one-sidedly (abstractly) and therefore also falsely represents the single foundation of all manifestations of the general crisis of contemporary civilization.

The trouble is also that whole (institutionally and professionally prominent) scientific institutes and individual scientists, included by the table of ranks in the bureaucratic structures of power, in their investigations and forecasts sin in the same way—and for the same reasons. The picture is the same in pedagogical scientific investigations and recommendations. Legislators and state executives publicly rely now on one theoretical assessment of the situation or forecast, now on another, depending on which can more obviously be used to justify their administrative decisions. For the “scientific” justification of any such decision bears no relation to its true (political) motives and goals.

Subjectively, they are convinced of both the scientific character of their decisions and their saving role. In human terms this is understandable, just as it is understandable that most teachers and higher education pedagogues should, as mentioned above, be convinced that the long overdue radical changes in the content, forms, and methods of educational activity were achieved primarily by bureaucratic pseudo-initiative. In fact, however, the goal and essence of the latter have remained the same as in the past—justification of the super-civic status of state officials, of their personal right to govern people. Thereby the state of a non-civil society, which in precapitalist history was the necessary social form of the reproduction of extensive economy, is consolidated and preserved as an integral whole.

However, we should also understand the more than serious difficulties of the martyrs [*strastoterptsy*] of the state will: without knowing it, they have fallen into a historical break between economic and cultural epochs. The global spread of economic activity of the intensive type is proceeding with difficulty: through the chaotic interdependence of historically diverse social forms belonging to the equally historically diverse modes of reproduction of (again) very diverse ways of life. And the victory of the intensive type of economy, facilitated today only by radically new discoveries in fundamental theory and their application in production, requires:

- the international interdependence of the productive activity of all producers and consumers of the means of life, first of all of the spiritual means of life, not only in the sphere of finance and trade but now (and above all) in that of information;

and this presupposes:

- civic freedom as the basis of any social form of the reproduction of spiritual culture; including, if not first of all, in all forms of educational activity that promote the formation and development of creative abilities in all its participants; moreover, not only in individuals but on a virtually mass scale, for

such is the indisputable demand of the culture- and science-intensive expanded reproduction of the real conditions of people's lives;

hence:

- the absence of rigid regimentation from above of the forms, means, and modes of labour of all its participants (first of all, of educational labour);

and above all:

- the presence of diverse forms of local self-government,²⁴ all the agents of which have a personal interest in the intensive improvement of production and educational practices, and engaged directly and professionally in them and capable of creative innovations without waiting for an order from above; this also requires a new (for us) special role for the state;

consequently, we urgently need:

- the state of a civil society, which must confine itself to monitoring the strict observance by all "zemstvos," innovators, project organizers, and executors (including in the educational sphere) of the general principles of state and civil law, protecting society and its members from the tyranny of certain persons, from their experiments with people.

To the category of such experiments should be assigned in the first instance hasty "innovations" in education. Their initiators may become once more (and today are becoming) bureaucrats in their lofty offices. But we must beware also of the pseudoscientific specialists who wait in attendance upon them and crave their favor and patronage, having suffered, without always being aware of it, professional failure in their scientific and business careers.²⁵ But, after all, they too are desperately bold "innovators," concerned only with themselves. That is why a law is needed! A state law on the impermissibility of educational reorganizations that are not approved by the civic community of scientific pedagogues.

These requirements of the time, I repeat, reach fulfilment in various ways. But their understanding only at the level of journalistic raptures and laments, incantations and bursts of indignation may easily go along with submissive compliance to other requirements—requirements of the non-civic state, more customary and so, as it seems to many, more natural.

There is one simple and indisputable criterion of the real role that the community of scientists plays in the people's life under the dominion of officialdom in a non-civic state. This criterion is the place of scientific people in the structure of the all-governing bureaucratic apparatus. If a place is most graciously established there for the community of scientists, then there can be no question of any innovatory self-government in the sphere of education!

Now—simply some facts:

In the state budget adopted by the Duma for each successive year, scientists and pedagogues (who, by the way, are also, by definition, scientists) in higher education are allocated one line together with state officials—servers [literal rendering of *sluzhashchie*, usually translated as “employees” —Trans.]. Read: those who attend upon [*prisluzhivaiushchie*].

Well! Frank, at any rate.

Further: where else, in what other state, are scientists and pedagogues in higher education (in secondary education, too) paid for their work in accordance with the table of ranks for officials— depending on the rank assigned to them, of which, if I am not mistaken, there are seventeen? The states that are generally considered democratic also spend money from their budgets on education (many times more money than our state, although still considerably less than what is really needed). But the pay of a pedagogue depends there not on his place in the state grid of ranks but, as a rule, on his success in his chosen career and on his prominence among specialist colleagues. This is determined, incidentally, by the rector and council of the university. At least, formally.²⁶

Where else, in which state, is the number of lecturers at a university or college determined on the basis of the number of students, using a coefficient established by the state? Where else does the very fact of the payment of a lecturer depend on his fulfilment of a teaching “load” imposed from above: so many hours of lectures, so many of seminars, and so on!?

Moreover, the funniest and at the same time saddest thing is that these “hours,” which were introduced many decades ago for all higher education institutions by government decree, are still in force to this day (possibly with correctives that are imperceptible to us). And to this day they turn professors, senior lecturers, and assistant lecturers into lesson-givers, overloaded with lessons and vitally interested above all in fulfilling the load of hours (so frankly is it named!). But by no means do they have a vital interest in a vision of theoretical problems that would be new for themselves and for the world, and without such a vision there is no point in speaking before a student audience (indeed, it does harm!). And besides this state-imposed teaching load, many other duties are assigned to them from above, in the majority of cases on an unpaid basis. Among the obligations for which they are accountable is the publication each academic year of scientific works to a total volume of at least three printer’s sheets—although today they no longer check the fulfilment of this plan norm. (Indeed, they no longer even check with their former rigor the very existence of publications.)

However, His Majesty the Plan continues, as in Soviet times, to hold sway in determining the total teaching load of a department and almost all other parameters of its “creative” activity in the course of a year. Nor has the demand disappeared for the numerous pieces of written information, of no use to anyone, that the various offices of higher education institutions collect in order to compile reports for the ministry. The same “legal field” of the planned economy of a non-civic state extends, both in general and in detail, to the work of scientific laboratories in research institutes. Thus over and over again we strive to climb up a staircase that leads down.

I repeat: all this would be funny if it were not so sad. And—the main thing—everyone is used to it, habituated to regard as self-evident the regimentation of each step of a higher education lecturer by the bureaucrats of state institutions. And not only by ministry officials. The law on education was adopted by the Duma easily and almost in passing, with all the gaping lacunae in the sections defining the purpose of the law and with its normative determinations of what schools and higher education institutions should be like in Russia, including the introduction of general standards for the content of education. Thereby this law too has placed pedagogues in the position in which the state authorities are accustomed to have them, so accurately defined by Saltykov-Shchedrin and Kapterev.

I pass, finally, to examples.

First example. Recently I read on an Internet site an interview with a scientist whom I know and respect. He sharply and justly criticized all the latest decisions of the Ministry of Education. But to a question on the role of the Supreme Certification Committee [*Vysshii attestatsionnyi komitet, VAK*] in the bureaucratization of the style, form, and essence of scientific work he replied suddenly thus: “Here you are not right. The decision regarding the scientific value of dissertations is taken not by bureaucrats of this institution but by very prominent scientists whom they recruit. They will not let slipshod work through.” There is an example for you of naive faith in the effect of implanting real scientists into the bureaucratic structure of our supreme scientific court!

As for many years a scientific supervisor of candidate’s dissertations and consultant for doctoral theses, as virtually a “permanent” opponent of such dissertations and theses, and as a member of a specialized council quite recently and with a feeling of deep relief released from this “load,” I bear witness to the fact that scientific councils not infrequently award coveted scientific degrees to the authors not simply of weak but of absolutely illiterate works. As a rule, the VAK approves their decision. This is no coincidence.

For it is not the scientists recruited as experts by the bureaucrats of the ministry (of the VAK) but precisely the bureaucrats them-selves who, over the course of many

decades, have sought (and each time, alas, successfully) the complete and definitive formalization of the texts of dissertations and theses, imperiously demanding exact correspondence to a format of their own design. Matters have reached a point at which both the author's abstract [*avtoreferat*] and the text of the dissertation or thesis itself must be constructed in accordance with a single pattern, identical for scientific work of all kinds and of the most diverse contents. So it takes no great effort even for the laziest student to fill in the required points (as in the questionnaire, beloved of bureaucrats of every stripe) with a scientific-looking set, organized as a rule in standard fashion, of superficially interconnected propositions, indicating in brackets the authors of works that they have not read. Without this, no scientific council will allow a dissertation or thesis to be defended. Because the VAK will not accept it! And it is not so easy for the members of the expert councils of the VAK, being true scientists, to discern the shallow person behind the monotonously smooth form of the work under certification, bedecked in endless references to world-recognized authorities (whose names are given in brackets, with quotations taken from secondary sources) and substantiating a "bold" formulation of a trivial idea.

But the VAK has not stopped at this. Even formerly, its bureaucrats would not accept an opponent's review unless it ended with a standard obligatory sentence—an agglomeration of words non-Russian in style to the extreme. Recently one scientific council, evidently well instructed by VAK officials, returned to me my rapturous review of a splendid doctoral thesis. It turns out that it is now obligatory to insert in the formal nonsense of the conclusion to which we have all long been accustomed: The thesis corresponds to the requirements of Point 13 (or Point 8, etc.) of the Regulations of the VAK Concerning the Award of Academic Degrees to Scientific and Scientific-Pedagogical Employees.

The thesis must correspond to the point! This is simply *ne plus ultra*—the brilliant invention of bureaucrats who have absolutely nothing to do with the business of creative thought and are utterly possessed by impunity for the tyranny exercised by them!

I am professionally aware of a dozen or so not simply weak but utterly vacuous doctoral theses that were defended successfully and certified by the VAK. Unfortunately, I cannot refer to them in support of the serious accusation that I level above against both the councils at which they were defended and the VAK because I myself do not like or know how to be judged. I know, however, that all those doing serious work in science are in agreement with me. This is demonstrated by the debates that have flared up from time to time over the course of many decades on the pages of popular newspapers. The indignant authors of striking articles, criticizing the forms and principles of scientific certification, have put forward the most diverse proposals: from the abolition of the candidate's degree to

the abolition of the VAK and the granting of the right of certification to assemblies of scientists themselves. But none of them has drawn attention to the fact that the VAK is merely a tiny part of the entire system of petty state oversight of education and science. And for so long as the system of bureaucratic tyranny dominates the whole of science and the whole of education, any transformations of the certification of scientific and pedagogical employees will end with its formalization and open the gates anew to those who, for the sake of acquiring a place in the state table of ranks, strive to enter “science” as one of the prestigious state domains.

Second example. From the first articles of the perestroika period right up to those published recently, the demand to abolish the teaching of philosophy in higher education institutions has been repeated with journalistic pathos, constantly and very insistently. At the same time, some people demand from the bureaucrats that the teaching of philosophy be transferred to secondary school, while others are opposed to this too. Yet others are no less aggressive but franker: “All these so-called humanitarian subjects in higher education institutions, taking from students time that they need for professional training, are a residue of ideological indoctrination, which is still advantageous to someone on top.”

And here I am compelled to say something that the reader, if he has read the article up to this point, could in no way have expected from me.

Irrespective of the arguments advanced by the persecutors of philosophy, in their demands for state intervention in this “disgrace” (I have in mind the vexing—for them—retention of the course in philosophy at all the country’s higher education institutions) they speak sincerely and say what they think, of which they are absolutely sure—and not without grounds. They know, better than the bureaucrats in the ministry, the real situation regarding the teaching of philosophy in their higher education institutions, where they work with the same students as the philosophy lecturers.

Their arguments are not serious, but that is a consequence of the positivist-empiricist orientation of the majority of natural scientists. However, the pathos of absolute conviction arises from just indignation at that profanation of the teaching process to which many, many departments have been forced to sink—not only philosophy departments but also all departments of so-called humanitarian profile as they are shuffled about from one ministry decree to the next.

As always, the ministry brought its decisions to life instantaneously, by a single stroke of the pen—the decisions to turn departments of “the History of the CPSU” into departments of “the History of the Fatherland” and departments of “Scientific Communism” into departments of “Sociology and Political Science,” the equally decisive and equally unprepared decision to create departments (or courses) of cultural studies, and all the other decisions, almost a dozen in all. Do these

decisions really tell you nothing? Just think. A party historian who had wreaked havoc not only on the history of Russia but also on that of its peoples now, even supposing that suddenly he had seen the light and changed his views, had to start—immediately and on the run, from one day to the next—reading a full course in Russian history! And the scientific communists, the bulk of whom were those same party historians and specialists in historical materialism? True, many of them, in the last decade before perestroika and especially when it began, themselves got “carried away” by sociology, but they were not prepared for serious work with sociological theories, nor ipso facto were they prepared for teaching these theories at higher educational institutions.

Regarding the courses in ethics, cultural studies, and so forth, again numbering almost a dozen and likewise irresponsibly recommended for the general cycle of humanities departments, I must speak even more sharply. We do not have in our country the required number of genuine specialists who have devoted their lives to these spheres of the spiritual culture of humanity! And, consequently, this initiative too of the Ministry of Education could and can bring nothing but harm.

All this is more than typical of the makers of state educational policy in Russia. Thus, in Soviet times too, not so long ago, it sufficed for a senile and feebleminded member of the Politburo to remark in passing that for some reason the set of Marxist-Leninist disciplines taught in higher education institutions did not include scientific socialism (communism), defined by Lenin himself, and this “science” made its appearance in higher education curricula. At instantly convened meetings at the party Central Committee, at city committees of the party, at the ministry, and at the Academy of Sciences, the necessity was “discussed” and unanimously recognized for the inclusion in the curriculum of this subject, to consist of the history of the party, the political economy of socialism, and historical materialism.

In exactly the same way, without any preparation of specialists for all the country’s higher education institutions, by wilful decision from above, new subjects of study were introduced: scientific atheism, Marxist ethics and aesthetics. With the same decisiveness and thoughtlessness, in 1947 (if I am not mistaken about the year), logic and psychology were suddenly introduced into, and then removed from, the curriculum of secondary education. There were, naturally, no teachers.

Indeed, of what concern is it to such important officials of educational administration who will teach students the subject introduced by them and how? The apology for a pedagogue himself, retrained by their order, will strive, naturally, to get established in this subject, so that his ignorance and incompetence should forever be concealed behind the title of senior lecturer or professor. The council of the institute will support their man, the VAK will let him through. And now we already have many hundreds of semiliterate senior lecturers and professors of philosophy, ethics, aesthetics, cultural studies, political science, contemporary

problems of science, and so on writing articles and books (now this is simple), holding forth at conferences, including international ones, acting as consultants for dissertations and theses, and providing obedient scientific staff for state boards of education at all levels. And that is how the alliance is formed between the state and its scientists.²⁷

So can lecturers personally fascinated by the problems of their science and personally interested in its study by the young pass by this (excuse me) most vulgar profanation of higher education? They do not pass by. They speak out at conferences and on television, they write in the newspapers of the urgent necessity of driving the humanitarian disciplines out of higher education. I have cited their arguments above.

I ask to be understood correctly: I know, not from hearsay but from personal experience, that in many humanities departments there also work true toilers of creative thought who fully deserve their titles and degrees. Their students love them just as devotedly as former undergraduate and graduate students used to love their counterparts even in the grimmest times for people in the humanities. But we can no longer tolerate willy-nilly the flood of imposters! The overwhelming majority of such people—indeed, almost all of them—honestly strove for a humanitarian (in particular, for a philosophical) education and to become higher education lecturers. But they were drawn onto an easy path of study and professional work not simply by the possibility of thereby rapidly establishing themselves but, above all, by the system itself, by the very essence of the formal approach to scientific certification. At every point on this path, they encountered the aforementioned and all other inventions of bureaucrats who demanded from them not creative independence but the obedient fulfilment of form.

My colleagues who suddenly feel offended by what I have said!

I do not speak badly of you, although you and I have played our part, as a rule a passive part but not altogether unwillingly, in the expanded reproduction of formal education in the ministerial fashion. For I know from my own experience how easy it is to be drawn into the routine of fulfilling senseless requirements of a board of education established not by us and not for us but over us. It is all the easier seeing how our daily encounters with students rejuvenate us all with the sensuous pleasure of our role as inspired preacher, if only of elementary truths. During my first years of work in higher education, to the detriment of the stern but also the happiest fate of him who lives in theory by the insoluble problems of being and fascinates his undergraduate and graduate students with those problems alone, I myself became the next victim of the very alluring role and elevated position of a pedagogue in higher education. But soon I had the great good luck of encountering those with a long-lasting and serious enthusiasm for something fundamentally different—namely, philosophy itself. And, of course, it is by no means I alone who

have had such good luck. I repeat again: there are many in our departments who live heedlessly by the high culture of philosophical thought. There are many who work with enthusiasm as philosophers and pedagogues much more productively than the author of these lines.

And, nonetheless, there are many others of us whose personal fates are crippled by the requirements of the ministry's curriculum. The content of courses and of the methodology, style, and tempo of their teaching, authoritatively determined by that curriculum, is hostile to the essence and spirit of humanitarian, and especially of philosophical, thought. Subordination to these requirements leaves us one joy—a dubious one, alas: we are lecturing, all the same, at an institution of higher education, we—candidates and doctors of science—are teaching undergraduate and graduate students!

Dear colleague-philosophers, for your and my own philosophy education this proud joy is not enough—not by a long, long way!

This is even more dangerous now that through the bureaucrats' exertions the third example has arrived. The freshest example, and it concerns precisely what and how to teach graduate students.

And so, a definitive decision has been made by that same VAK (by the ministry) to abolish the graduate course and examination for the candidate's minimum in philosophy. In its place a course and examination are being introduced in the history and philosophy of science. Indeed, the very word "philosophy" has been retained thanks to the titanic efforts of philosophers who are close to the state authorities. Now and irreversibly for many years ahead, it has been established that graduate students, who in any case have studied in their undergraduate years in terms of ideas the history and problems of their science in the course on each of its branches and subdivisions, will prepare separately from those problems for the candidate's examination dates and names, facts and laws.²⁸ And philosophers—against their philosophical conscience, which does not allow them to see in science (in particular, in the natural sciences) the main essence and conscience of culture—will be forced to treat the empiricist logic of naturalism as the supreme achievement of philosophy, mined from those same depths of self-sufficient rational discourse. And this will come to pass.

Moreover, in some philosophy departments that not for the first year are running ahead of administrative progress, not only has the curriculum for this course for graduate students been hastily worked out—it was already being taught in the 2001/2 academic year. Even a textbook has been issued. But have they not been overhasty? The idea of the scientific servant of the authorities is another, but equally senseless, twist of the affair. The history and problems of the sciences that define the profile of a higher education institution will be taught by their local

leading lights, while the philosophical problems of science in general will be taught by philosophers.

I shall deal with the illiteracy of this decision a little further on. While deliberations on the matter were under way at the top, in many philosophy departments a different decision was made: we'll teach everything ourselves! And not for the sake of the good life, but in that the course for graduate students gave philosophy departments the "teaching hours" they needed.²⁹ A reduction in teaching hours would have entailed for each department the loss of "points" [*stavki*] and, consequently, the dismissal of lecturers. In addition, it would have meant loss of status for the department, of its influence on other departments, and of its higher-education image. All the departments that define the profile of a given higher education institution still depended, albeit only slightly, even on the philosophers: their graduate students might obtain an unsatisfactory mark in the examination for the candidate's minimum. It is not for nothing that each year, before this examination, the professors and heads of the special departments, renowned and proud of their science, unofficially appeal to the head of the philosophy department (whom at other times they treat as superfluous) to "let through" their graduate students with a decent mark! But it did not occur to any of the philosophy lecturers that the cause of this humiliation of theirs was again the formal regulation of the "candidate's minimum!"

But here is another reason why philosophers might hope for the preservation of their leading role in the matter of the formal state certification of scientists and pedagogues. As an example, I shall cite the experience of our new faculty, namely, the Faculty of Clinical Psychology, where in the past academic year this subject, together with philosophy, was already taught to first year students.³⁰ And it was taught by your obedient servant. I taught it at the request of the faculty but, naturally, in accordance with a curriculum that I had worked out myself. And the leadership of the faculty turned to the philosophy department because physicists, chemists, biologists, pathologists, and so on refused to teach this course. And they refused for a very serious and weighty reason: the theoretical and methodological problems of contemporary science (including those of psychology and medicine), like their history, can be presented substantively to both undergraduate and graduate students only through the detailed content of the mutually generating problems of each specific science.³¹ Thus and only thus!

But even that is not all! The ministry's idea of the course in question returns the philosophy department, like all the profile-defining departments, to the memorable exercises from courses in dialectical materialism that entailed the superficial and unprofessional discussion of specific problems that have arisen at various times in various and mutually isolated natural sciences. For the bureaucrats, like the

philosophical prospectors in their service, adhere to just two principles, the first of which is empirical and the second pedagogical.

Empirical: Science is the knowledge of the “eternal,” and therefore indisputable, objective laws of nature; all subjective descriptions of invariants in the life of man and his communities, of his history, and of his so-called humanitarian works is not science;

Pedagogical: Formal education can be constructed exclusively as the teaching of knowledge that is accepted (for the time being!) as definitive truth and of abilities and skills developed wholly on the formal basis of that knowledge (expressed in readymade formulas).

The result will be the usual one. Philosophy lecturers who are not specialists, let alone theoreticians, in any of the natural sciences will be forced to teach their own courses in undeviating accordance with the logic of objective science, without venturing beyond its limits. Consequently, they will be forced to teach their undergraduate and graduate students not only outside but also against the truly philosophical comprehension of the reflexive logic of the self-developing concept, of the logic of theory as such.

Conclusions: This wilful decision of the Ministry of Education, like all the others, is merely a fragment of the general positivist offensive of the educational bureaucrats not only against philosophy—the highest form of spiritual-theoretical reflexion on the universal (and not only scientific) forms of the living culture of humanity. The offensive is being conducted for the preservation and consolidation of the power hierarchy of the bureaucratic class that calls itself the state. For the consolidation of its power over people engaged in affairs. But, as it turns out, over their affairs too—and in particular, over philosophy.

This is all the truer seeing that it is precisely philosophy that sticks like a bone in the throat of the imperious managers of the time and content of higher education. They do not understand and do not accept it other than as an ideology that expresses and defends their interests. Against your will, you almost come to believe in the eternal confrontation between philosophy and state power. And, as a consequence, to believe that the most wise Plutarch was right to declare that all philosophers are divided into two groups, the apologists and the critics, but that as soon as a philosopher becomes an apologist he ceases to be a philosopher, while the critics are driven out.

Thus, even today our state authorities of all ranks do not understand philosophy, just as they did not understand it during the time of their undivided dominion over higher education. That is why they then prescribed for philosophy departments various versions of apologetics, sincerely regarding truly philosophical texts as criticism—either as a revision of Marxism-Leninism or as bourgeois nonsense—and

on this basis drawing organizational conclusions for the crushing of the disobedient. And, as we recall, they drove them out. And not only to Europe. And by no means on a “philosophers’ steamship.”

So you see that today I have the freshest examples of the zeal of the ministry officials who once more impose on all departments textbooks that have been prepared off-handedly by some especially zealous person and without much thought approved by them as standard and obligatory. As I am able to prove from one of the cases known to me, these are strikingly illiterate textbooks, written precisely by those whom they long ago recruited to the staff of the ministry. Of such apologists (at first against their will, and then also by inclination), of those who are able to pose as philosophers only by wielding the imperious spectre of the ministry I have already spoken and shall speak no more.

But all the more insistently shall I continue to speak of how it is precisely we—philosophy lecturers, all together and in unison—who must do all to return the whole of higher education, and philosophy education first of all, to the status of a state-civic institution. And in many instances simply to that of a civic institution, created by civic associations and movements. But in either case higher education will demand from the state only two manifestations of its interested participation in our affair, in our management of it:

1. the strict observance, by both the bureaucrats themselves and all participants in the educational process, of a new law on education that our affair requires and that does not impose petty regimentation, in the interests of the bureaucratic control of people, of the content, methods, and forms of either secondary or higher education; and
2. the material provision (full or jointly with private sources) of Russian educational institutions and civil educational initiatives that are unreservedly approved and accepted by the educational community, which through its civil status should be in no way dependent on the interests and whims of bureaucrats. For it is only as such that these institutions and movements are necessary for the intensive development of the people’s culture (and thereby also for all forms of the life of our entire society), and therefore acutely necessary also to the state of a civil society.³²

* * *

I understand very well that this minimum program of mine is absolutely utopian given the current tendency, so usual for Russia, toward the almost complete statification of the main forms of public life. I understand too, but I do not accept, the fact that not only in education but also in all economic affairs, in politics, and in culture it is precisely the state interest that reigns supreme—the interest and selfish

needs of those who are connected, directly or indirectly, with crumbling state property in all the current variants of its fusion with private property.

I also understand why philosopher-ideologists (apologists) of all varieties—from “servants of the state” [*gossiluzhashchie*, i.e., state employees—Trans.] to those who were by chance enthralled during perestroika by the idols of the uncontrolled market and of political theater—will try to see in this article nothing, or something that they have firmly rejected (for example, Marxism), or journalistic criticism of “our young democracy.”

Nevertheless, I do not abandon hope in those who themselves personally and acutely suffer, and try to comprehend theoretically, the whole absurdity and extreme danger of the old and, alas, current status of culture, and also therefore of philosophy as a subject that, for the time being, is still taught in Russian higher education. To them and to them alone I address this article about education and state power.

Notes

1. F.T. Mikhailov, “Grazhdanskie initsiativy v negrazhdanskom obshchestve,” *Peremeny*, 2001, no. 1.
2. Here I refer to an organic part of the clan commune that crystallized within it—the group of elders who had a thorough knowledge of the ritual models and rules of behavior, if only thanks to their longer participation in the constant performance of ritual. I also have in mind magicians (shamans, etc.) and all other members of their traditional gathering, which emerged in the mists of time through that same clan or tribal ritual.
3. See his *Economic Manuscripts of 1857–1859*.
4. In reality, their invention is the work of fundamental theory (logic, mathematics, and engineering). But in the overwhelming majority of variants of their business and production use, the operator remains in the position of that same “appendage” to the machine, only in even greater dependence on assigned tasks not set by himself and on machine programs not created by himself.
5. Their obsolescence is a form of consumption.
6. F.T. Mikhailov, “Obrazovanie filosofa,” *Filosofskii fakul'tet*, 2001, no. 1.
7. At that time there was no need to provide a commentary for this remark: Marx was often quoted to the effect that “in order for the world to become philosophical, philosophy must become worldly.”
8. This is what my friends at the time called the Marxism of the ministry’s curricula.
9. Examples (at that time) were the Department of Marxism-Leninism at the G.V. Plekhanov Institute of National Economy and at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), the Department of Logic at the M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University, and for a time also the Department of Marxism-Leninism at the V.I. Lenin Pedagogical Institute. I have named, naturally, only those departments with which I have had personal connections of one kind or another, although I might have said the same of a number of other departments on the basis of secondhand information.

10. Glass bead game—in this case, a purely verbal glass bead game. I use the German word because it better conveys the falsity of the object of the game: glass beads, pearls made of glass.
11. However, even now it does not arise for the majority of us.
12. Otherwise known as head of the Science Department of the CPSU Central Committee.
13. As a very passive participant in this meeting, I quote from memory, but almost word for word.
14. At one of the philosophy departments of a new university in the ancient and glorious city of N., I made the acquaintance of a young philosophy lecturer, “the pride of the department” (according to his colleagues), who assured his students and myself that “a person who is not Orthodox is objectively not a Russian, not a Russian by nationality!” There followed quotations from the works of V. Solov’ev, V. Rozanov, S. Bulgakov, and other philosophers of the “Silver Age,” who, however, had never asserted anything of the kind directly. Those who came closest to such a categorical conclusion were, perhaps, some of the heroes of F.M. Dostoevsky, but, as it turned out, my hero simply did not know that our entire religious philosophy “came out of Dostoevsky,” as he himself had once “come out of Gogol.”
15. This is precisely how it is “understood” by virtually the majority of naturalists. But I discuss this further on.
16. I have written about this period in greater detail in “Grazhdanskie initsiativy.”
17. More precisely: the interests of subjects of the reproduction and consolidation of hierarchical structures for the government not of affairs but of people.
18. M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, “Melochi zhizni,” *Sobr. soch.*, vol. 9, pp. 77–78.
19. Later, I consider the “scientific data” on which contemporary administrators rely.
20. P.F. Kapterev, *Istoriia russkoi pedagogii* (St. Petersburg, 1910), p. 106.
21. With us this happened practically everywhere.
22. Kapterev, *Istoriia*, p. 321.
23. A.I. Adamskii, “Obrazovanie i svoboda,” *Pervoe sentiabria*, 2001,
 - I. Like our old zemstvo [an institution of local government in the late tsarist period—Trans.], but without its laxity, irresponsibility, and so on.
 - II. It is only in the depths of their subconscious that such people experience their ascent up the official ladder of the Russian table of ranks as failure. This experience does not penetrate into consciousness and is held, together with the conscience, in the subconscious, like the fear of death. But it is precisely this experience that moves their efforts to push their publications, curricula, “designs,” and so on through the official into the professional milieu. I shall soon be compelled to return to them.
26. True, this too is in the ideal case: even in the so-called democratic countries, refined forms of bureaucratic control (and, consequently, of state power) not infrequently reduce to nothing the appearance of self-government.
27. This alliance has a long history in educational affairs—the more than half-century-long history of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of the RSFSR and of the USSR (now the Russian Academy of Education). Many hasty decisions of the academy’s parent ministry have been “elaborated” in terms of scientific pedagogy and “substantiated” post factum in the works of its associates. Including the latest decisions, such as twelve-year schooling and the unified examination. However, the paradox of tense confrontation within the coexistence between the zealots of the bureaucratic standardization of formal education and personal, unique, that is, truly cultural creativity (in this case, the creativity of psychologists and pedagogues) is just as essentially inherent in the history of this academy as it is in the history of culture in general. It is not for nothing that the most productive psychological-pedagogical and didactic ideas, known and revered throughout the world, were born in the bowels of this same academy. Many school collectives in our country as well as abroad promote them and try to apply them

in real life. But in no way can these ideas be incorporated into unified forms and standard content!

28. If there were neither history nor problems, then that would again be thanks to formal education, with its list of obligatory topics approved by authorities above the higher education institutions. The presentation of pieces of knowledge, abilities, and skills, in isolation from the problematic and pathos of the historical path of their creation, does without history but not without “logic”: the logic of the naturalistic recording of results, the logic of “critical” empiricism is reproduced here willy-nilly.
29. I spoke above of these accursed “hours,” which determine from above the quantitative, and thereby also the qualitative, composition of a department.
30. I remind the reader that apart from the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences I also work at the Russian State Medical University (RGMU).
31. In other words: in its full course, with resort to serious scientific literature for each section.
32. Provided only that through our initiatives we shall succeed in hastening the transformation of our state into the state of a civil society.

Available from:

<http://mesharpe.metapress.com/app/home/contribution.asp?referrer=parent&backto=issue,5,5;journal,40,238;linkingpublicationresults,1:110912,1>

Course: Education

23054, Mikhailov, Education and State Power, 2006

14725 words